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DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

TO: \_\_\_\_\_

Kathy Brown

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PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

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FROM: \_\_\_\_\_

Carle Wacey

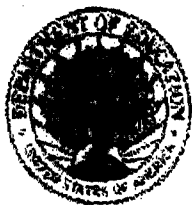
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20205

June 8, 1998

The Honorable William E. Kennard  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
1919 M Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20554

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JUN 16 1998  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Dear Chairman Kennard:

As America enters the Information Age, we must choose whether or not we will extend opportunity to all Americans -- or leave many behind.

For more than 60 years, Americans have benefited from universal phone service. As we expand and modernize our communications networks, we must maintain America's long-standing commitment to universal service.

As the President said in his commencement address at MIT last week, one of the most important steps we can take to bridge the "digital divide" is to provide schools, libraries, and rural health care centers with affordable access to the Internet and telecommunications services. The benefits of the "e-rate" -- approved by the Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support -- are profound. For the very first time, a child in the most isolated inner city or rural town can have access to the same universe of knowledge as a child in the most affluent suburb. Our children will be better prepared to compete for the high-tech, high-wage jobs that our economy is producing in record numbers. Doctors and patients in rural communities will be able to consult with the nation's top medical experts, even if they are thousands of miles away.

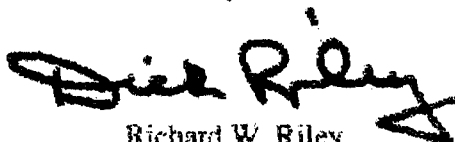
Some have suggested that the Federal Communications Commission should terminate the e-rate or take steps that would seriously jeopardize its viability. We strongly disagree. As you know, students in poor and predominantly minority schools are almost three times less likely to have Internet access in their classrooms than students in wealthy schools. Proceeding with the e-rate will widen the circle of opportunity -- delaying it or undermining its effectiveness will heighten the risk of economic inequality and social division.

To claim that America cannot afford to make this investment is absurd. As you have noted, the costs of the e-rate have been more than offset by other actions that the FCC has taken to reduce long-distance phone rates.

Page 2 - The Honorable William E. Kennard

Schools and libraries all over America have worked hard to prepare for the opportunity that the e-rate can create. They have developed technology plans, raised matching funding, and filed more than 30,000 applications. To turn our back on the hopes and dreams of children and communities all over America would be unconscionable. We urge you and the other FCC Commissioners to strongly support the e-rate.

Sincerely,



Richard W. Riley  
Secretary of Education

William M. Daley  
Secretary of Commerce

Daniel R. Glickman  
Secretary of Agriculture

Donna E. Shalala  
Secretary of Health and Human Services

cc: The Honorable Harold W. Furchtgott-Roth  
The Honorable Susan Ness  
The Honorable Michael K. Powell  
The Honorable Gloria Tristani